

An Introduction

Module 1: The Challenge



Step Up and Step Out For the Health of Our Kids!

“Obesity, overweight, and a sedentary lifestyle are serious health issues now and will only worsen without thoughtful and scientifically based interventions that address societal and individual attitudes and behaviors and their environmental context. Physicians and other health care professionals, elected officials, educators, employers, and parents need to recognize the magnitude and impact of this major health problem and provide the will and energy to correct it through preventive approaches. In the past 25 years, several newer areas have been incorporated as targets for clinical and public health concern, such as tobacco control and injury prevention. It is now time to promote weight control and physical activity.”

Jeffrey P. Koplan, MD, MPH; William H. Dietz, MD, PhD (1)

Why now is the time for each of us to Step Up and Step Out to Reach for the Stars... Children!



Is there anything more important than the health of our children?

Our children are our future, yet their health is in jeopardy. More children are obese and inactive now than ever before; this puts them at risk for serious health consequences.

As we walk through the door into the 21st Century, we are challenged to **Step Up and Step Out** in our communities...to identify nutrition and physical activity related trends and problems, and then act upon the challenges they create.



"Americans of all ages are heavier than ever before. This trend, along with the aging of the nation's population, is increasing the risk of heart attack and stroke. Improving the health of Americans through physical activity and good nutrition must become a national priority."

**Martha N. Hill, RN, PhD,
Past President, American Heart Association (2)**

Today's impact... Current trends in eating and activity choices

Walk with us on a tour of current trends as they relate to eating and activity choices.



- As much as 40 percent of a family's food budget is spent in restaurants and on carryout meals. (3)
- There is a decrease in total minutes spent in grocery shopping, meal preparation, and actual eating. (4)
- There is a move in the food industry to sell foods in larger portions. Consumers now expect value meals, and super-sizing. It has reached the point that many restaurants have done away with "small" as a choice, and a typical "medium" sized muffin is six ounces, triple the USDA's two ounce serving size. (5)
- Americans say they are spending significantly less time eating than they did 20 years ago, and that may be because they're snarfing down foods while they do other things and don't really count it as eating time. (6)
- Teen influence on the family grocery dollar is increasing. With more single parent households, and two parents working homes, teens have more responsibility for grocery shopping and meal preparation. Teens purchase \$51.6 billion in groceries each year. (7)
- Teens ages 12-17 eat a third of their meals away from home- to the tune of \$12.7 billion a year spent at fast food restaurants. (7)



- USDA reports a slight decrease in American consumption of red meat, eggs, and whole milk. At the same time, a small increase is seen in the consumption of vegetables, fruits, and grains. The report also shows the intake of sugars, fats and oils, and soft drinks on the rise. Soft drink consumption, per capita, has risen from twenty-four gallons annually in 1970, to fifty-two gallons in 1995. In comparison, the average American consumes six gallons of low fat milk a year. (8)
- Food safety issues and food-borne illness are on the rise in our food supply. (9)
- Young people are now spending an average of 35-45 hours a week sitting in front of some kind of screen. (10)

“Overweight and physical inactivity account for more than 300, 000 premature deaths each year in the U.S., second only to tobacco-related deaths...Health care providers must counsel their obese patients; workplaces must offer healthy food choices in their cafeterias and provide opportunities for employees to be physically active on site; schools must offer more physical education that encourages life-long physical activity; urban policymakers must provide more sidewalks, bike paths, and other alternatives to cars; and parents need to reduce their children’s TV and computer time and encourage outdoor play. In general, restoring physical activity to our daily routine is critical.”

Jeffrey P. Koplan, Director of CDC(1)

- Fifty percent, or ninety six million American adults own home exercise equipment. Forty three percent of the equipment is not used and just gathers dust. (11)
- A recent study had people set a goal of taking 10,000 steps a day (just in daily routine and activity), and found that only 3,000 steps were the average number taken daily for these couch potatoes. (12)





References and Resources

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- (2) U.S. Department Of Health and Human Services. *Physical Activity and Good Nutrition: Essentials for Good Health, AT-A-GLANCE 2000*. Atlanta, GA: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2000.
- (3) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: Healthy People 2010 (Conference Edition, in Two Volumes). Washington, DC: January 2000. For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Washington, DC 20402-9382, Stock Number 017-001-00543-6, ISBN 0-16-050260-8. For more information visit: <http://www.health.gov/healthypeople/> or call 1-800-367-4725.
- (4) USA Today 11-21-97
- (5) *Supersize Foods, Supersize People*. Nutrition Action Newsletter. Vol 25, No. 6, July/August 1998
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- (7) Nutrition News, a quarterly publication from the Kansas Beef Council: Information from a survey completed by the New York research firm David Michaelson & Associates for Channel One Network, a news and information station for young people, airing in 12,000 schools nationwide. Fall 1998
- (8) University of California Wellness Letter, January 1998
- (9) Tufts University Health and Nutrition Letter: A Hard-To-Kill Form of Salmonella On the Rise. Vol 16 No. 6, August 1998.
- (10) Press Release of the American Academy of Pediatricians. *Article Underscores Media Impact on Children and Adolescents*. January 5, 1999.
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- (12) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, April 21, 2000. Available online www2.cdc.gov/mmwr/weekcvol.html

